Conservation Strategies: The Partners Program works with landowners to remove invasive shrubs (i.e., juniper), reseed native grasses and forbs, mulch eroding areas, and build sediment catchment structures in eroding arroyo channels. The Partners Program also provides cost share for cross fencing, stock tanks and other water sources that enable landowners to rotate their livestock and rest pastures for one or more growing seasons to improve wildlife habitat.

Forest Habitats

Forests provide habitat for resident and migratory birds; resident wildlife such as elk, deer and wild turkey; and several rare, threatened or endangered species including the federally endangered Mexican spotted owl. Montane forests contain headwaters of many large watersheds, such as the Rio Grande, Pecos and Gila rivers. Pin*-on-juniper woodlands provide habitat for a host of wildlife species, especially migratory birds.

Conservation Strategies: Fire suppression has led to overcrowded trees, disease and insect outbreaks that kill many trees, and greatly increased the risks of catastrophic wildfires. The Partners Program helps private landowners to thin their forests to promote better forest health and improve wildlife habitat. We also provide funds to fence riparian areas, restore stream channels, and restore forest meadows.

Sacramento Mountains checkerspot butterfly
Photo by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Other Habitat Restoration Activities

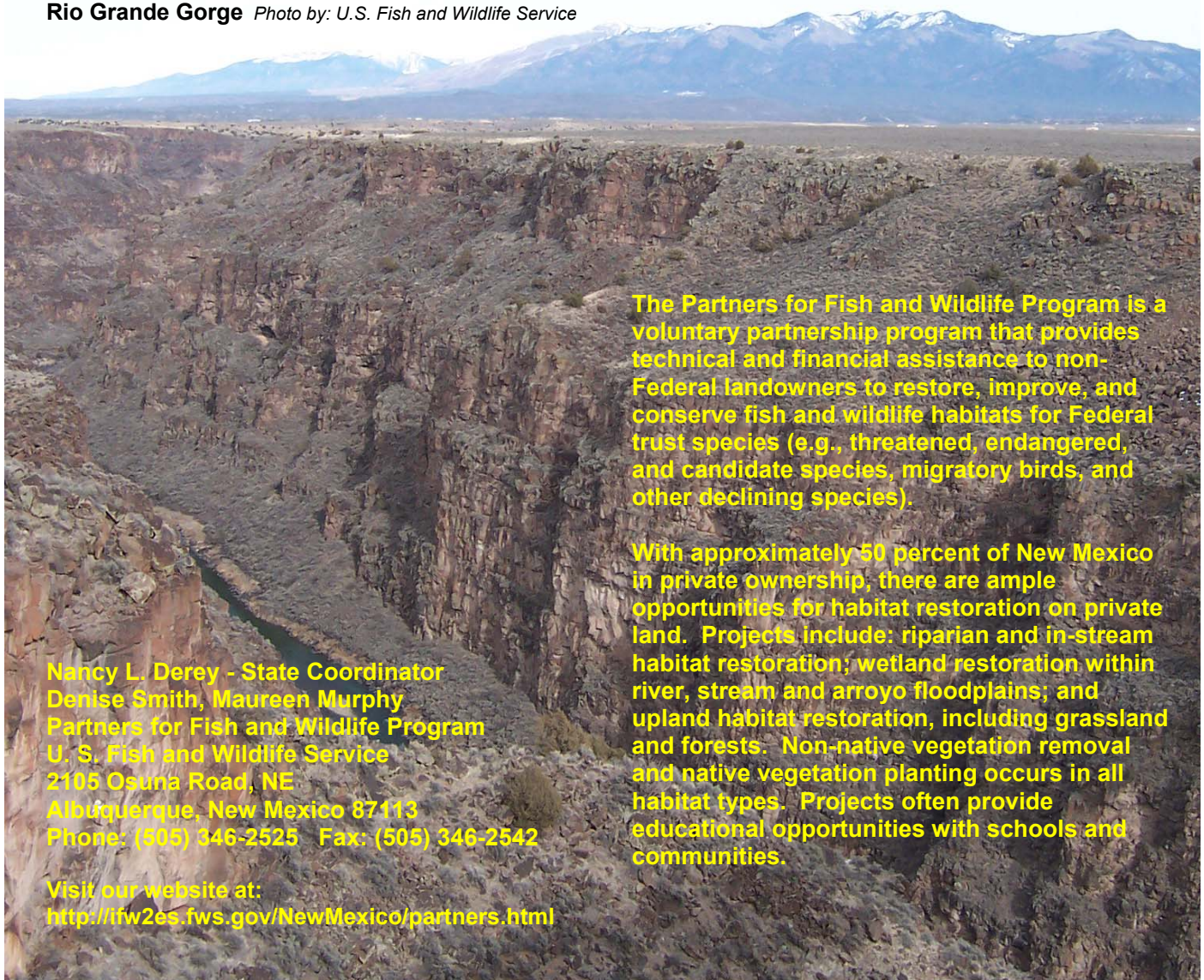
The Partners Program also funds outdoor classrooms that provide schoolchildren and communities with "hands-on" educational opportunities. These projects benefit fish and wildlife and the human communities that use them.

Accomplishments 1990-2003

184 projects that have improved or restored habitat on more than 60,000 acres, including:

- **300 miles of riparian habitat**
- **70 stream miles**
- **1,215 wetland acres**
- **4,037 riparian acres**
- **53,000 upland acres (grasslands, forests, and shrublands)**

Rio Grande Gorge *Photo by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service*



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program

New Mexico

The Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program is a voluntary partnership program that provides technical and financial assistance to non-Federal landowners to restore, improve, and conserve fish and wildlife habitats for Federal trust species (e.g., threatened, endangered, and candidate species, migratory birds, and other declining species).

With approximately 50 percent of New Mexico in private ownership, there are ample opportunities for habitat restoration on private land. Projects include: riparian and in-stream habitat restoration; wetland restoration within river, stream and arroyo floodplains; and upland habitat restoration, including grassland and forests. Non-native vegetation removal and native vegetation planting occurs in all habitat types. Projects often provide educational opportunities with schools and communities.

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Private landowners generally provide 15 to 25 percent of the cost-share funding and/or in-kind services (labor, maintenance, and materials). One-to-one cost share often is achieved by partnering with a host of nationally based and local partners with wildlife habitat funding programs and technical expertise.

NEW MEXICO ACTIVITIES

- **Restoring habitat for migratory birds and declining, threatened, and endangered species in:**
  - **Grasslands**
  - **Riparian corridors**
  - **In-stream**
  - **Wetlands**
  - **Forests and shrublands**
- **Fencing sensitive areas**
- **Controlling invasive & non-native vegetation**
- **Replanting native plants**
- **Public outreach and education**
- **Installing wildlife or livestock water sources to benefit wildlife**

BE A NEW MEXICO PARTNER!

Join the private landowners, counties, communities, schools, Native Americans, and local agencies who have restored their lands with the help of the Partners Program. A variety of Federal, State, and non-profit organizations have contributed cost-share funds and/or technical assistance on many Partners projects. Some of these partners are:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Forest Service
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
New Mexico State Lands Office
New Mexico Department of Game and Fish
New Mexico Environment Department
University of New Mexico
New Mexico Office of the State Engineer
New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office
Local Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Quivira Coalition
Rio Grande Nature Center
The Nature Conservancy of New Mexico
Ducks Unlimited
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
New Mexico Riparian Council
Tree New Mexico
National Wild Turkey Federation
Local Watershed Associations

HABITATS OF SPECIAL CONCERN AND CONSERVATION STRATEGIES

IN-STREAM, RIPARIAN, AND WETLAND HABITATS

In the arid Southwest, these relatively moist, lush areas are among the most productive wildlife habitats for breeding, wintering, and migration. Desert riparian ecosystems have the highest density of breeding birds in North America, with at least 400 different bird species observed. Riparian areas comprise 1-2 percent of the landscape, yet three-fourths of the vertebrate species in New Mexico depend on riparian habitat for at least a portion of their life cycle. The endangered southwestern willow flycatcher and threatened bald eagle migrate through and sometimes nest in riparian corridors within the State. Wetlands connected to river systems provide nursery and resting areas for many species of fish and invertebrates. Riparian habitat in New Mexico has been greatly reduced by human activities and management.

Southwestern willow flycatcher
Photo by: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Conservation Strategies: Fencing is an effective way to protect in-stream, riparian and wetland habitats from livestock. Fences can also reduce impacts caused by recreational uses. Habitats recover rapidly in these protected areas. Removal of non-native species such as salt cedar and Russian olive, and revegation with native species help restore the native habitat.

In-stream work concentrates on the concept of natural channel design that reduces erosion and sedimentation, improves fish and wildlife habitat, and reestablishes a more stable stream channel.

Restoration of wetlands within the floodplains of river systems provides wetland functions lost by human activities that have adversely affected the natural ecological functions.

PRAIRIE, GRASSLAND AND SHRUBLAND HABITATS

The plains-mesa sand scrub areas with their associated grasslands are habitat for prairie species such as the lesser prairie-chicken, sand dune lizard, and a variety of song birds and mammals. Studies show that lesser prairie-chicken and sand dune lizard populations have declined, which is directly correlated with the decline in he quantity and quality of their habitat.

Lesser prairie-chicken
Photo by: Oklahoma Dept. of Wildlife Conservation

The plains-mesa sand scrub habitat tends to become dominated by junipers or other desert scrub species with heavy use. Restoration of these areas to their native grasses and shrubs is important to migrating and resident songbirds, raptors, reptiles, and mammals. These grasslands also provide valuable water quality benefits (e.g., reduce runoff, minimize erosion, and trap or filter pollutants) to some of the major river systems in the State.